

News Release

Poinsettias Herald Holiday Season for Horticulture Students at U of M, Crookston

By Itollefts on Wednesday, December 7, 2011



Hundreds of rooted poinsettia cuttings arrive in August in anticipation of another holiday season. For seven students involved in the commercial floriculture class at the University of Minnesota, Crookston, those cuttings have developed into a beautiful poinsettia crop under their skill and coaxing.

This year's poinsettias create a beautiful and colorful display with their showy "flowers" known as bracts and include varieties such as Freedom Early Red, Freedom Early White, Freedom Early Pink, Ice Punch (red bracts with pink centers), Red Glitter (red bracts with speckles of white) and Prestige Maroon (deep red bracts).

Members of the fall semester class include: Mitch Allore, a senior majoring in golf and turf management from North Mankato, Minn.; Ben Sullivan, senior majoring in natural resources from Crookston, Minn.; Clay Schmitt, a senior majoring in golf and turf management from Delano, Minn.; Kevin Coyne, a senior majoring in golf and turf management from St. Paul, Minn.; Chad Harrer, a senior majoring in golf and turf management and horticulture from Brooklyn Park, Minn.; Kelsey Leake, a junior majoring in horticulture from Emerado, N.D.; and Josh Trottier, a senior majoring in golf and turf management from Devils Lake, N.D.

The students started the process of forcing the plants to induce bract color in time for the holiday season in October. Following a specific procedure to control the light, the students covered the plants with a dark cloth at 4 p.m. and uncovered them at 8 a.m. each day to regulate the length of daylight the plants receive. The students are responsible for greenhouse chores on the weekends as well. Although the class is taught by Sue Jacobson, the crop is in the hands of the students. The work and production of the poinsettia crop is entirely the responsibility of the class. Jacobson says "It's better to learn expensive lessons in school than at your job. We don't fire the students."

The Agriculture and Natural Resources Department offers commercial floriculture as part of the horticulture program to teach students to produce quality plants for a specific date - a skill necessary for employment in a greenhouse or garden center. "Poinsettias form their colored bracts, when the light is regulated," explains Jacobson. "The poinsettia really doesn't have a blossom like most flowers. Instead, the colorful red, pink, or white petals are modified leaves known as bracts. The blossoms are actually the small yellowish clusters in the center."

Jacobson often allows problems to develop to see how the students will solve them--something they would have to do in an employment situation and giving them an opportunity to apply what they have learned. The class demands hard work, dedication, and a strong team effort to grow the best poinsettias. Leadership and responsibility are two of the qualities that develop in this type of teaching and learning environment.

"Students learn so much from applying their classroom learning to real-world experience," Jacobson explains. "By taking responsibility for the crop, the students are accountable for the outcome making the commercial floriculture class one of the most memorable for the students." The class is excellent training for a career in horticulture, a multi-billion dollar industry in the U.S. To learn more about the horticulture program with emphases in environmental landscaping, production horticulture or urban forestry, visit [www.UMCrookston.edu/academics](http://www.UMCrookston.edu/academics).



Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 29 bachelor's degree programs, 18 minors, and more than 40 concentrations, including several online degrees, in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of about 1,400 undergraduates from more than 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit [www.umcrookston.edu](http://www.umcrookston.edu).

In the photo at top are members of the fall semester class including: back row (l to r): Mitch Allore, Ben Sullivan, Clay Schmitt, and Kevin Coyne. Front row: Chad Herrer, Kelsey Leake, and Josh Trottier.

In the lower right photo shows the poinsettia tree in the Sargeant Student Center.

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